

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
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NEA-11 HA-05 /110 W
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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7373
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1084

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, WA, SF
SUBJ: NAMIBIA: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND NEXT STEPS

1. SOUTH AFRICAN INTENTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS ON NAMIBIA ARE AT THIS POINT UNCLEAR. VORSTER HAS TOLD THE FIVE HE DOESN'T BELIEVE SWAPO WILL EVER ACCEPT THE WESTERN PROPOSAL AND, WHILE THE DOOR CAN NEVERTHELESS BE KEPT OPEN FOR SWAPO, THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE SHOULD NOW BEGIN. IT APPEARS THE SAG COUNTS ON ITS OWN ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE A CREDIBILITY WHICH WILL ALLOW IT MANEUVERING ROOM WHILE THE FIVE PURSUE SWAPO. THIS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE PERCEPTION BEHIND THE DECISION TO LAUNCH THE CASSINGA
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RAID. AND IT IS BEING TESTED AGAIN WITH THE SAG NOTICE TO US OF ITS PLAN UNILATERALLY TO COMMENCE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BY MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE PRESUMABLY SEEKING TO MOVE IN WAYS WHICH, WHILE PRESERVING THE VALIDITY OF THEIR

ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL, WILL EITHER DISCOURAGE SWAPO FROM AGREEING TO THE PROPOSAL OR, IF SWAPO DOES AGREE, ASSURE IT IS UNDER CONDITIONS MOST FAVORABLE TO SOUTH AFRICA. THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE SAG IS PROBABLY AIMING AT BRINGING SWAPO TO AN EARLY DEFINITIVE DECISION BEFORE IT CAN RECOVER MILITARILY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY FROM CASSINGA.

3. HOW FAR THE SAG CALCULATES IT CAN GO IN EXERCISING ITS PERCEIVED MANEUVERABILITY WITHOUT RENDERING ITS ADOPTION OF THE WESTERN PLAN MEANINGLESS WE DO NOT KNOW. THE SOUTH AFRICANS THEMSELVES ARE LIKELY UNCERTAIN ABOUT IT. WE EXPECT THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THEY WILL TAKE SOME POSITIVE STEPS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR BONA FIDES. THEY MAY, HOWEVER, OPT AT THIS TIME SIMPLY TO GO AHEAD WITH THEIR VOTER REGISTRATION SCHEME, PRESENTING IT IN THE MOST CONSTRUCTIVE LIGHT POSSIBLE. IN LEAKS TO THE PRESS, THEY ARE ALREADY BEGINNING TO DESCRIBE THE PROPOSED MOVE (REPORTED SEPTTEL) AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE STEP CONSISTENT WITH THE WESTERN PROPOSAL.

4. VORSTER'S DEADLINE OF JUNE 6 FOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON VOTER REGISTRATION IS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE INDEPENDENCE TARGET DATE, DECEMBER 31. THIS TARGET DATE, HOWEVER, IS ALREADY OUT OF THE QUESTION IF THE TIMETABLE ENVISIONED BY THE WESTERN PROPOSAL IS CONFIDENTIAL

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FOLLOWED. EVEN IF IMPLEMENTATION BEGAN TWO WEEKS FROM NOW--I.E., THE MIDDLE OF JUNE--ELECTIONS WOULD FALL IN THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY. AND BY THEN THE RAINY SEASON WILL HAVE BEGUN, MAKING CAMPAIGNING EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND PRACTICALLY RULING OUT PARTICIPATION BY LARGE NUMBERS OF NAMIBIANS IN THE POPULOUS NORTHERN AREAS.

5. SIGNALS HAVE BEEN MIXED, BUT WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED TENTATIVE SIGNS THAT THE SAG MIGHT BE PREPARED TO LET THE DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE SLIP. IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE APE TOWN FIVE ON MAY 24, VORSTER MADE A POINT OF STRESSING THAT TO CARRY OUT HIS "SOLEMN UNDERTAKING" ON INDEPENDENCE BY DECEMBER 31, THE ELECTORAL PROCESS MUST NOW BEGIN (CAPE TOWN 1047). ON MAY 17, HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA SUGGESTED TO THE FIVE THAT THE DATE WAS NOT ABSOLUTELY SACROSANCT AND IN FACT NOW PROBABLY NOT ATTAINABLE (CAPE TOWN 988). BOTHA'S AIDE, NEIL VAN HEERDEN, IN A CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR MCHENRY ON MAY 26, SAID HE THOUGHT THE DEADLINE COULD BE MOVED BACK, THOUGH "NOT MORE THAN FOUR MONTHS, SIX MONTHS AT THE MOST." IN THEIR MEETINGS WITH MCHENRY

IN WINDHOEK, NEITHER DIRK MUDGE NOR THE ADMINISTRATOR-
GENERAL FOCUSSED ON THE INDEPENDENCE DATE.

6. THE PROPOSED SAG MOVE ON VOTER REGISTRATION THUS
SEEMS INTENDED: TO MOLLIFY BLACK TURNHALLE LEADERS
IN NAMIBIA WHO ARE ANXIOUS FOR MOVEMENT; TO KEEP
PRESURE ON THE WEST TO PUSH SWAPO FOR AN EARLY
DECISION; AND TO PREPARE FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF AN
INTERNALLY ARRANGED ELECTION, WHICH COULD BE HELD
THIS YEAR. VORSTER WAS EXPLICIT AND FIRM ON MAY 24
IN SETTING THE TIME FOR HIS VOTER REGISTRATION
ANNOUNCEMENT TWO WEEKS HENCE. ASIDE FROM THE DATE
FOR INDEPENDENCE, PREVIOUS DEADLINES WHICH THE SOUTH
AFRICANS HAVE GIVEN US HAVE NOT BEEN PRESENTED WITH
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SUCH SPECIFICITY OR CATEGORIC PERSONAL COMMITMENT
BY THE PRIME MINISTER. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER,
SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICIALS IN CAPE TOWN AND NEW YORK
HAVE INDICATED THAT EVIDENCE OF MOVEMENT WITH SWAPO
IN THE NEAR TERM COULD POSTPONE THIS MOVE (USUN 2163,
CAPE TOWN 988).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1084

7. WHETHER THE SAG IS PREPARED TO KEEP THE DOOR OPEN ENOUGH TO ALLOW SOME REALISTIC PROSPECT FOR SWAPO TO COME IN MAY BECOME MORE APPARENT IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO. IF A FRONT LINE SUMMIT ON NAMIBIA APPEARS IMMINENT, THE SAG MIGHT DELAY THE VOTER REGISTRATION ANNOUNCEMENT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SAG REFUSES TO HOLD UP THE ANNOUNCEMENT, IT MAY STILL BE PERSUADED TO HANDLE THE MATTER IN A WAY WHICH WILL MINIMIZE ITS UTILITY TO SWAPO AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR PROCRASTINATION AND, IF POSSIBLE, SERVE TO ENCOURAGE AFRICAN PRESSURE ON SWAPO TO ACT. TO THIS END, THE REGISTRATION PROCLAMATION SHOULD INCLUDE NO DATE FOR ELECTIONS AND BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE AFFIRMATION THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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IT IS INTENDED TO HELP PAVE THE WAY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL AND SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY THE UNSR.

OUR STRATEGY

8. THE SAG'S EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN THE INITIATIVE AND KEEP PRESSURE ON FOR AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE WILL HAVE AN AMBIVALENT EFFECT ON OUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS- FULLY MOVING AHEAD WITH THE FRONT LINE AND WITH SWAPO. THESE EFFORTS TEND TO CONFIRM SUSPICIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S INTENTIONS AND PROVIDE SWAPO FURTHER PRETEXT FOR DELAY; BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY HEIGHTEN THE SENSE OF URGENCY IN COMPLETING THE PROCESS.

9. WE SHOULD, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO TRY TO CONSTRAIN DAMAGING UNILATERAL MOVES BY THE SAG--PERHAPS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, BY A LETTER OR LETTERS FROM THE WESTERN FOREIGN MINISTERS. IN ADDITION, WE BELIEVE A SHORT MESSAGE FROM THE CONTACT GROUP TO THE SAG SHOULD:
--REITERATE BRIEFLY THE MAIN POINTS WHICH AMB MCHENRY MADE HERE;
--REVEAL THE STATE OF PLANNING FOR THE SUMMIT; AND
--UNDERSCORE IN GENERAL TERMS THE NEED FOR CONFIDENCE- BUILDING MEASURES.

10. A REP OF THE CAPE TOWN FIVE SHOULD AT THE SAME TIME BE AUTHORIZED TO FLOAT INFORMALLY WITH FOURIE

THE VARIOUS POSITIVE STEPS WHICH THE SAG COULD TAKE INCLUDING THOSE PROPOSED BY THE DEPT (STATE 135975). WE WOULD, HOWEVER, STILL ADVISE AGAINST RAISING THE "DEFACTO CEASEFIRE" SUGGESTION, EVEN IN INDIVIDUAL, INFORMAL APPROACHES BY REPS OF THE CONTACT GROUP. WE BELIEVE THE SAG WOULD RUN WITH THIS
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SUGGESTION AND USE IT TO JUSTIFY RETALIATION IN THE EVENT OF SOME SWAPO TERRORIST ACTION. SWAPO'S CAPABILITY FOR GUERRILLA ACTION IN THE EASTERN SECTOR AND FOR ASSASSINATION OR SABOTAGE ANY PLACE IN THE TERRITORY REMAINS BASICALLY UNIMPAIRED. WHEN NEIL VAN HEERDEN PRIVATELY FLOATED THE CEASEFIRE IDEA ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE A GOOD PR FOR THE SAG AND NOT UNWELCOME, BUT VERY LIKELY THE WESTERN COUNTRIES COULD NOT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH A CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE PRIOR TO AGREEMENT ON THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IN OUR FORTHCOMING PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WE MIGHT WISH TO TAKE A SIMILAR LINE ON A CEASEFIRE IF RAISED BY THE SAG.

11. THE OTHER NEW AND IMAGINATIVE IDEAS PROPOSED BY THE DEPT -- AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL AND A CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD -- WILL PROBABLY NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE SAG BUT ARE WELL WORTH PUTTING FORWARD.

12. WHILE MAKING THESE APPROACHES TO THE SAG, WE NEED TO GENERATE A CAREFULLY BALANCED EFFORT WITH THE FRONT LINE. WE SHOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE PRESSING TOO HARD AND FAST IN THE WAKE OF CASSINGA, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO INSTALL A SENSE OF URGENCY AND TO DISCOURAGE ANY IDEA OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN THE PROPOSAL. WE NEED TO RECREATE THE PERCEPTION AMONG THE AFRICAN STATES THAT IF SWAPO DOES NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL, A JUST SETTLEMENT WITHOUT FORMAL SWAPO APPROVAL MIGHT MATERIALIZE WITH ACQUIESCENCE OR ACCEPTANCE BY A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE SHOULD DOWNPLAY THE CASSINGA RAID IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE AFRICAN STATES, GRADUALLY RENEW EMPHASIS ON SWAPO'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT, AND UNDERSCORE THE MERITS OF THE PROPOSAL AS IT STANDS
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AND THE DANGER OF TINKERING WITH IT.

13. WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO
WIN SAG AGREEMENT TO AN AMENDMENT OF THE PROPOSAL UNLESS
IT INVOLVED BALANCING CONCESSIONS--A BOX WHICH WE
WOULD PRESUMABLY NOT WISH TO OPEN AGAIN. THE SAG
APPEARS CONFIDENT THAT THE WEST WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO
JUSTIFY SUPPORT FOR SANCTIONS SHOULD THE INTERNATIONAL
INITIATIVE COLLAPSE AS A RESULT OF SOUTH AFRICAN
REFUSAL TO CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO MITIGATE THE
EFFECTS OF THE CASSINGA RAID. WESTERN REACTION TO THE SHABA
INCIDENT HAS LED SOUTH AFRICA TO BELIEVE THAT THERE HAS
BEEN A CONSERVATIVE SHIFT IN THE WEST ON AFRICAN
AFFAIRS AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY IT HAS SOMEWHAT
MORE MANEUVERABILITY ON NAMIBIA THAN IN THE PAST.
EDMONDSON

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